

# **Tsunami Public Affairs Working Group Report**

**Arcata, California, April 28-30, 1999**

Two conference calls were held since the last meeting in October 1998. Information was shared via surface and email. A media advisory was issued on April 22<sup>nd</sup> to west coast media to draw attention to the Steering Committee Meeting, the national tsunami mitigation effort, and public awareness of tsunamis. Most PAWG members represented their state or agency as coordinators of disaster preparedness month activities during April 1999. Activities are summarized below:

## **Hawaii**

Hawaii celebrates each April as Tsunami Awareness Month to commemorate the disastrous April 1, 1946, tsunami which killed 173 people. Delores Clark and Barbara Hendrie report that a month of activities and events was sponsored by the Pacific Tsunami Museum, State Civil Defense, and National Weather Service (Pacific Tsunami Warning Center and International Tsunami Information Center) including the following:

Open House at Pacific Tsunami Warning Center each Friday & Saturday

Information Booths at Kapolei Spring Fair and Hilo Earth Day Fair

Presentations at Border Books

Survivor reunions in Hilo

Pacific Tsunami Museum - Laupahoehoe Exhibit Opening on April 24

Articles in the Hilo Tribune Herald; Mahogany Newspaper, Honolulu Advertiser and Star-Bulletin

TV Specials: Officials from State Civil Defense, Hawaii County Civil Defense, and Pacific Tsunami Warning Center officials were among those who appeared in the History Channel's program, "Wrath of God - Tsunami" which aired April 7. They also appeared in a program which aired on Honolulu CBS affiliate KGMB April 16.

## **California**

Tom Mullins reports that most of their efforts in April focused on earthquake preparedness.

Campaigns and workshops were held in several areas. The state tsunami working group met the week of February 15 to review guidance for local governments. Tom has been working overtime supporting California Emergency Services winter storm mitigation programs and also Y2K. He will push for next year's earthquake awareness activities to include a tsunami component. Tom traveled to Oregon during the period and complimented Oregon's tsunami information signs--very visible and attractive.

## **Oregon/Washington**

Both states are celebrating Disaster Preparedness Months in April, focusing on earthquake and tsunami awareness. A variety of activities were held.

Rob Harper reported that a statewide earthquake/tsunami drill was held in both states on Earth Day, April 22. Government, schools, and businesses participated.

Washington Emergency Management is collaborating with the National Weather Service to expand warning systems by installing additional NOAA Weather Radio transmitters in the western Olympic Peninsula, an area which has reception problems. Tsunami warnings will be broadcast as part of the Emergency Alert System and radios can be programmed to sound a tone alert during a warning situation.

Rob made an interesting observation. Now that the tsunami public education project is underway with the signage program and community workshops, there has been a subtle change in the way the media and the public deal with tsunami information. It is a positive change, an obvious better understanding and appreciation of the threat of tsunamis.

Angie Karel reported that 15 additional interpretive markers were ordered for installation in April (in Oregon). Public ceremonies were held at the Beverly Beach State Park (4 fatalities from the 1964 earthquake) and the Hatfield Marine Science Center. The DOGAMI 13-minute tsunami video is being distributed to cable TV stations. Oregon continues to conduct teachers workshops using the new K-3 curriculum. The tsunami products catalog is now available and will be provided to PAWG. A contract has been signed with Robert Olsen and Associates to develop a tsunami warning system guidance document for the west coast states (Alaska-California). The goal is to document each state's monitoring and warning systems and develop a consistent message, warning, and distinctive sound.

## **Alaska**

Mike Haller is replacing Jeff Wells as the PAWG representative. Local media covered the 35th anniversary of the 1964 earthquake and tsunami. Ruth Barritt reported that Dick Hutcheon and Tom Sokolowski were among those interviewed for stories. The West Coast and Alaska Tsunami Warning Center held an open house.

## **FEMA**

Mike Howard reports FEMA's Project Impact Program is underway in several communities. Mike is also very involved in Y2K planning. He reminds us to use FEMA Radio Network.

## **NOAA**

National Weather Service issued a media advisory to national press regarding the 35th anniversary of the 1964 earthquake and tsunami. It generated local media coverage in Alaska and Washington (perhaps other places) but we are unaware of national coverage from a major outlet. It appears that the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Valdez oil spill was a bigger news story.